

WEST

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L4: Entry 7 of 20

File: USPT

Jan 11, 2000

DOCUMENT-IDENTIFIER: US 6014634 A

TITLE: System and method for providing shopping aids and incentives to customers through a computer network

ABPL:

A system and method for delivering purchasing incentives and a variety of other retail shopping aids through a computer network, such as by E-mail over the Internet or the World Wide Web. Customers (10) of retail stores can establish a bidirectional communication link with the system, log in (16) to the system, and then elect to browse among available purchasing incentive offers (18, 22), or elect to explore other shopping aids, such as a shopping list generator (26), a recipe center (30), or simply elect to claim a product rebate or to receive product information. If the customer elects to have product information or rebate information delivered, only minimal customer identification is required. For purchase incentives redeemable at retail stores, the customer must provide identification information and must also designate a retailer (12) at which the purchasing incentive can be exercised. For receipt of focused incentives based the customer's past shopping behavior, the customer must also supply a unique customer id., such as a check cashing card number or credit card number, used for in-store purchases. For delivery of a product sample, the customer's name and address must be supplied. The system merges this customer-supplied information (270) with other purchase incentive data (272) and creates a printable graphical image of the purchasing incentive (282) for transmission to the customer. In an alternate embodiment of the invention, the purchase incentive is not transmitted directly to the customer. Instead, the terms of the incentive are transmitted electronically to the retail store (310) designated by the customer, who receives either a token (316) to present at the store or an advisory message. In yet another embodiment of the invention, incentives may be targeted to specific consumers based on a consumer purchase history (502), and transmitted to consumers' computers (510) using electronic mail addresses stored in a consumer database (506), or using a "personal page" in the computer network, established for each consenting consumer.

BSPR:

The present invention resides in a system and method for the distribution, via a computer network, of incentives and other related shopping aids useful to retail customers. Importantly, the incentives are distributed in such a way that they may be redeemed only at a specific retailer selected by each customer.

BSPR:

A difficulty with conventional incentive distribution methods is that different retail marketing areas have different weekly cycles on which incentives and discounts are based. In one area, retailers may advertise weekly specials beginning on Thursdays in preparation for weekend buying, while in another area they may advertise weekly specials in a Sunday newspaper supplement. Manufacturers may offer special deals that are completely unsynchronized with these local retailer cycles, based, for example, on a calendar week starting on some other day. In the cooperative site on which the present invention is implemented, all the advertised incentives, whether coming from retailers or manufacturers, can be timed to comply with the advertising cycle of the local retail region.

DEPR:

The token and voucher program provides advantages for all parties to each transaction. First, for manufacturers there is increased security for promotions introduced by computer networks such as the Internet. Instead of printing

potentially reproducible monochrome coupons that are effectively redeemable for cash, the user's home computer generates a token that has to be taken to a store at which the qualifying products must be purchased by user before a cash voucher is generated. Since the token system ensures that the discounted products are purchased, the manufacturer pays only for positive results for each incentive offered. Moreover, the system avoids the inherent negative connotations of coupons.

DEPR:

Similarly, for the retailer, handling and redemption problems associated with black and white coupons generated by computer users are eliminated. The retailer also benefits because, one version of the system requires the user to return to the store to present the voucher. Consumers who are also Internet subscribers benefit because the system should allow for the distribution of more incentives, and incentives of higher value, over the Internet. The system also reduces the consumer paperwork because multiple coupons do not have to be clipped, printed and taken to the store. Only a single token is needed to make the required purchases and obtain a voucher for a cumulative cash discount, redeemable either immediately or at the next store or chain visit.

WEST

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L4: Entry 10 of 20

File: USPT

Jun 29, 1999

DOCUMENT-IDENTIFIER: US 5916024 A

TITLE: System and method of playing games and rewarding successful players

DEPR:

The method and system of the invention lend themselves particularly well to educational shows for children. Questions pertaining to educational toys, to books, to stories and to subjects being taught or addressed, are interspersed in the show. Children are rewarded with tokens or other forms of award, such as coupons redeemable at candy stores, ice cream parlors, and the like.

DEPR:

For the implementation of game/quiz shows, the following advantages of the invention are noted. The system of the invention does not require any wiring or rewiring of a home nor the use of telephone lines, and may be offered to viewers free of charge. In the context of the disclosed embodiment, a telephone is suggested merely as a convenient and rapid means for interaction between respondent and host, but is not required to practice the invention. For example, the external audience might be located in a separate room within walking distance from the studio in which case interaction can be accomplished personally by allowing a member of the external audience to walk over to the studio. The system permits home viewers to participate in quiz shows on the spur of the moment without advance notice and without any requirement for special forms or entry blanks. The system can be superposed upon a variety of game and quiz shows to permit viewer participation without interference with existing show formats, and has the advantage of expanding the television audience, thereby attracting sponsors of the shows. The machine readable card 48, or a one-time coupon which may be outputted by the dispenser 46, may be presented or redeemed for prizes by successful participants at a local store or other business establishment cooperating with the broadcaster.

DEPR:

According to the method of the invention, the number of prizes awarded and their values are set by the sponsor of the program, and normally are set so as to optimize the financial return to the sponsor or broadcaster. Normally, in a quiz program, a plurality of tasks will be presented. Each task is formulated in such form that the task setting message may be electronically transmitted from the central location as the second signals or second set of signals of the aforementioned Group One to be received by the viewers at the remote locations. It is noted that all of the signals comprising Group One may be transmitted at the same time, such as by being part of the same pictorial presentation. A simple illustration of such presentation would involve a celebrity appearing before a television camera, holding a sign reading "Who am I?".

DEPR:

According to a preferred embodiment of the method employed in the system described, a player is able to discern whether two sets of alphanumeric data on the recording medium are a match, a partial match, or have some other correlation; but the player may not know the amount of the monetary prize presented on the outputted recording medium. The medium, which may be a printed coupon or a magnetized card is delivered by a winning player to a redemption center where the player is informed of the size of the prize. Such a redemption center may be a place of business, for example, a store in which such a prize evidenced by a printed coupon or magnetized card may be redeemed for cash and/or merchandise. This method of informing players that they have won a prize, without knowing its amount, is utilized to attract buyers to a place of business. The above method and system permit conducting a game similar to a lottery by retail

businesses, which game is purely a game of chance and in which players at home may participate without charge to them.

DEPR:

The product selection and a winning respondents score are outputted to a device at each contestant's location for generating a permanent record, such as a coupon, which, when dispensed, has provided thereon an indication of the prize and of the chosen product, including any sales or redemption information the advertiser wants the shoppers to have. In some instances, only one mode of scoring may be desired. This is the case if only one fixed award is to be made to winners obviating the computation of a score. An example would be a "true or false" type of answer. Such a single fixed award is made to all successful participants in case a sponsor intends to introduce a new product, in which event winning contestants are given the opportunity to select a free sample from a number of different available products. The chosen product is then specified on a prize coupon.

DEPR:

To attract numbers of shoppers to stores, a percentage of the coupons dispensed can be "blind coupons" that carry an extra prize, ascertainable only upon redemption of stores, if the numbered coupons match the "lucky number" of the day in the store. Coupons can have advertising and promotional messages printed on them in accordance with programming signals received by the response units from a central location. Advertisers can change the text of such coast-to-coast messages on very short notice.

CLPR:

14. A method for dispensing promotional award coupons sponsored by an advertiser, comprising the steps of:

CLPR:

15. A method for dispensing promotional award coupons sponsored by an advertiser, comprising the steps of: